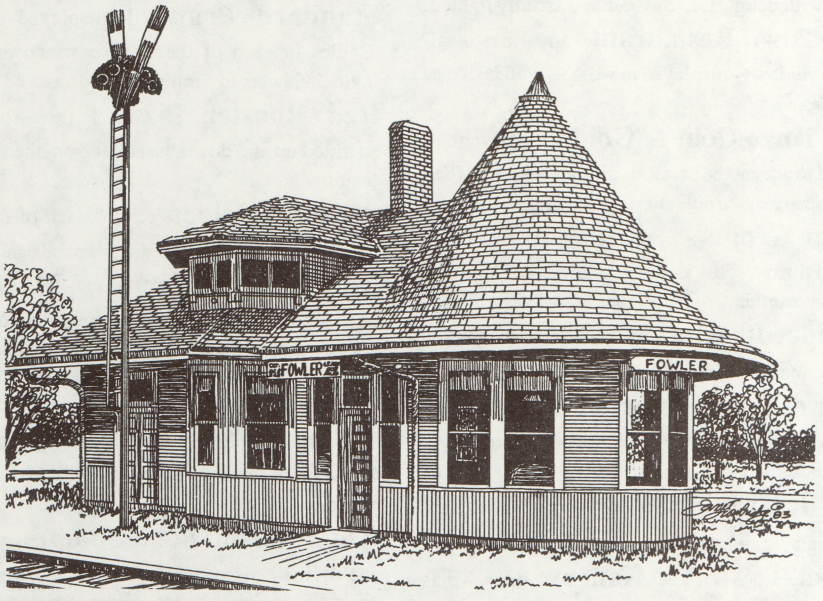
Depot Town Rag

January 1989

FREE 100% RAG CONTENT

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI



The witch's hat depot - Janet Trowbride Francouer's drawing, above.

At one time there were at least four of these "witch's hat" depot in Michigan -- at South Lyon, Clarkston, Saranac and this one at Fowler. Saranac still stands, South Lyon has been relocated and is a local museum, Clarskston is used by a local theatre group, but Fowler's was taken down several years ago. The distinctive conical roof was also used by the Grand Trunk system in Canada.

- from the Michigan Historical Society's "Brackets & Bargeboards"

What could an active DDA do for the Depot Town district?

The law providing for the creation of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a remarkable device because it allows the creative powers and business skills of citizens to be mobilized in the recovery of a depressed neighborhood or business district. Under this law, a group of concerned citizens can be empowered by the city council to study the needs of their designated area and devise a plan to meet those needs.

Basically, the DDA can get approval of the city council to perform many governmental functions, almost as thought the DDA were an extension of the city government. The advantage is that the DDA can devote its attention exclusively to the area under its jurisdiction. And the rest of the community is protected by the requirement that all projects require the approval of the city council.

Historically, the law creating DDAs was devised to counteract the economic decline of cities prompted by population moving to the suburbs (continued on page five)

Olde Towne Coin & Gold continues improvements

Last summer saw new asphalt paving in "The Gold Shop's' front, side and back and then the new window neon was installed right before the Victorian Holiday. The bright green window cappings create an electric echo of the older, more historic buildings in the block and bring back some of the architectural whimsy recently painted out next door.

Richard and Sharon Robine's Depot Town business has become one which involves all the family in a former gas station which has been renovated into one of the most active businesses on the block. Rag editors happened by with their window award on Richard's birthday and caught the whole family celebrating an exciting day in the life of Depot Town.

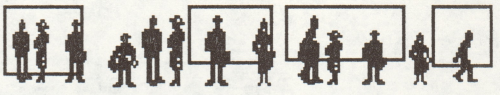
1988 Festival of Lights as much a 'people show' as a light show

People to plan the event, support the event, people to put bulbs inthe strings, people to put signs up, people to put lights in trees, people to supply and operate heavy equipment, people to call and coordinate volunteers, people to act as hosts (450 of them) at the gates, people to see that the lights are turned on and off every night, people to fix them if they don't work, people to act as security for traffic flow and walkers, people to take displays down and store them, people to remove signs and store them, people to count coupons (for the guessing contest), people to write stories (newspapers to print them), people to donate dollars for the sixty trees to be decorated and the nineteen wrought iron displays, people to solicit financial support to pay for the whole thing, people to write checks, people to print the coloring books, 150,000 people to enjoy them. People, people people. Sounds like most of Ypsilanti, doesn't it?
Wouldn't work without them.

Thanks for the opportunity to express my appreciation for the many hands it takes to make the Festival of Lights a brilliant success.

-Carolyn A. McKeever, 1988 chair, Festival of Lights

Victorian Holiday windows awarded



Few commercial display windows still enjoy the warm creativity remembered in Depot Town's annual Christmas displays, and the annual recognition of those efforts is just as unique. But so many windows were still being decorated the night before the December 4th Victorian Holiday kickoff that the judges announced they would return a week later to view Depot Town's creative efforts and create a prize-winning category for every window decorated in a Victorian, non-plastic, non-blinking theme.

A new craftsperson at the Farmers' Market Craft Show supplied this year's awards -- tiny hand-made wreaths -- and the committee added wooden plaques in the shape of a bell or building, inscribed "DTA 1988" for the awards.

Outstanding displays included (in the order toured the evening of Saturday, December 10th :

Sidetrack -Fresh, new start with the former elegant decor disappearing with the former management. This year's designs recalled the first year after The Central Bar was replaced - elegant and tasteful.

Depot Exchange - Gorgeous antique sleigh and toys accented the usual high quality found in the district's oldest antique shop.

Artrain Building- The Shankwiler Christmas tree was bigger than ever this year -- a full ten feet wide at the top, where it met the 20" ceiling -- much to the delight of the three Shankwiler grandkids!

River Art Works' Snoopy-like snowstorm delighted every age kid on the block.

Hon's Flower Shop rivals anything done by the Hudson Dayton Corporation in recent years. Joe Wizauer started the tradition down here.

Bell, Book & Candle artfully displayed their holiday gift items with gaily decorated shopping bags.

Miller's Ice Cream Parlor showed great narrative creativity --Santa ascending the chimney with cookie crumbs, empty milk glass (and gifts) left behind!

Ike's Barbershop - best day/night compatibility with delightful toys and tree artfully lighted.

Old Town Restaurant - great use of all those windows - displayed to work as well inside as outside.

Old Town Coin & Gold - the new neon served to accent the precious gift items inside. (See accompanying article on page one.)

Shear Genius - a most effective overall design theme. This single window is delightful all year 'round.

Esquire Interiors - The UPS packages got everyone ready for the mystery of the holiday.

Artwear Adventures & Awards boasted the tiniest display, but artfully presented. Good job for a first-time window!

J & R Trading Post's wishing window captured every tot's heart along the sidewalk.

Depot Town Art Gallery added Xmas color and lighting to the show already in progress.

Our Little Secret showed their products in a tasteful and traditional holiday setting.

Depot Doo's stacks of toys, gifts and toy trains looked like the ultimate Christmas tree setting for a playful Christmas morning.

Designs on You enticed every female party-goer to have her ensemble assembled there!

James MacDonald & Apple Annie's window showed their antique lines from several periods in history.

Cross Street Antiques showed off top quality antiques in the traditional setting of two Tiffany-like windows. Very New York!

Standard Printing displayed electric candles in each of their office windows, which invited viewers to scrutinize the decorated interior.

Red Rooster Pizza's three-foot tree sparkled up and down the street from their western window.

Aubree's Saloon circled each of their five windows with tiny red lights, garlands and apples.

The Ypsilanti Farmers' Market not only supplied the rest of the neighborhood with products, materials and ideas for their own holiday decor, but gave what is described as largest and best example of overall interior decor theme.

Miller Motors added Santa and gifts to a holly-green Hudson in that venerable auto show window.

The Ypsilanti Food Co-op enjoyed every inch of their place in their first year of ownership of their River Street home. Even the scoop of the cornice was highlighted with the strings of white lights which could be seen from Riverside Park's popular Festival of Lights.

YPSI DIXIT:
Overhead at Farmers' Market on a recent Saturday morning:

"Anybody who believes money can't buy happiness doesn't know where to shop!" - Bob Crawford.

Many shoppers found bargains on 'happiness' during December's Victorian Holiday sales in Depot Town.

Forty-six compete in Victorian bake-off

Only eighteen bakers pre-registered for the Sunday, December 4th baking contest sponsored by the Depot Town Merchants' Victorian Holiday event, but twenty-eight more showed up on the day of the judging! The judges were overwhelmed with both the number and quality of the entries.

Judges included such luminaries as Connie Crump of *The Ann Arbor News*, Jo Collins Mathis of *The Ypsilanti Press*, and Betty Shakleton, a recent Depot Town resident. Their careful attention to organizing and tasting the many entries took more than an hour in the exciting event held in the Farmers' Market Freight House on that festive Sunday.

First place prize was the much-admired 1890 Victorian baking cupboard which went to Darlene Mood for her delicious Black Forest Cheesecake.

Nadine Van Witzenburg won dinner for two at the Sidetrack as second prize for her Christmas Log.

Third place winner was Ty LaVacque, who won a Miller's Ice Cream apron for his Gateau St. Honore.

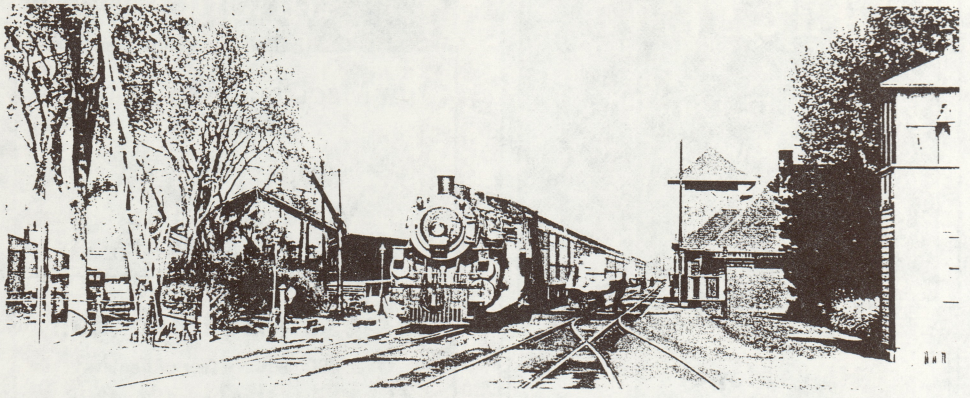
Recipes from this year's contest will be used to compile a Victorian Christmas Cookbook to be sold at next year's baking contest, and Depot Town's Sally Richie says, "Plans are already under way for next year's contest." She cited such improvments as more judges, categories, faster judging, and more prizes.

City Body
20 East Cross Street
Front end alignment
and
Collision repair

City Radiator
100 North River
483-2248

Ted's Auto Electric
307 North River
483-1238

Calendar art to start off 1989:



This photo of a steam engine at the depot in Ypsilanti graced a recent railroad calendar, but originally came from our block sometime around 1920. (Note the auto parked behind what is now Aubree's. They couldn't park in the lot in those days because all those trees were in the way!)

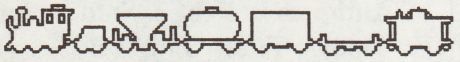
Meet Depot Towner, Betty Shackleton, a

judge in the December Victorian Holiday baking contest and recent resident of an apartment in the Newel Building.

After teaching Special Education for two years in US schools in Germany, Shackleton came back down to the district where many of her teacher friends had settled in recent years.

Not content to just settle in to her historic apartment overlooking the depot, Betty quickly became a neighborhood activist and is seen in the shops, restaurants and at Market on at least a weekly basis.

When guests at her Freight House Christmas party asked if it was 'safe to walk through the Festival of Lights," her reply had only to do with the cleaned-off sidewalks. Welcome!



They're still working on the railroad

Cooperative community's copper caper

Two separate contractors met in Depot Town in December to finish removing unused telegraph lines along the Detroit-to-Chicago Conrail line. Much like the celebrated driving of the Golden Spike in Utah which commemorated the completion of the nation's east/west line, last month's railroad work crews were busy dismantling their hardware when east met west in Ypsilanti.

Workers from the crew which had started in Jackson, Michigan were responsible for climbing the poles along the track and snipping the wires. The four man team climbed without safety equipment -- only spikes and snips, aided by hugging the pole as each man climbed up to the cross bar. After snipping the wires, they were cut into manageable rolls and loaded onto trucks bound for the smelter. All that copper will be recycled, of course.

Railroad officials say that the newer technology for RR commuications travels either by rail-centered signals or by radio in today's rail business.

The poles are expected to be removed soon, and neighborhood kids have already begun to harvest the much-prized insulators being dropped along the right of way. Antique dealers on the block have recommended waiting until they're collected, washed and exhibited in their shops, however - purely for safety reasons!

Keeping in touch in historic Depot Town

Just about everyone is liable to get grabbed when shopping or going to meetings in Depot Town. But Depot Town 'grabbings' don't make the news like the rapes and muggings reported in other commercial districts. We're often accused of doing things differently down here, and perhaps the Depot Town model for physical contact could spread out to the rest of the modern world.

The local style of familiar physicality includes hugging, patting, kissing, nudging and hand holding. Most of these intimate greetings are preceded by eye contacts such as winks, stares and other subtle looks which can best be seen and not descirbed verbally.

People often hold on to each other when conversing on the sidewalks and in the shops of Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town. Handshakes are protracted into hand-holding and hugs can easily be extended to intimate arm locking while the conversation continues.

It's not unusual to see pairs of people strolling arm-in-arm, hand-in-hand or one with an arm on the shoulder of their walking partner. Such physical propinquity has little, if anything, to do with boy/girl friend steady dating. The mix of sexes and ages in this block indicates that people just like each other a lot and are comfortable in showing their trust and enjoyment of each other.

Unlike high school romancers, Depot Town's embraces have little to do with passionate sexuality; only passionate familiarity. Old friends and associates report that 'shnoozling and shmuzzling' are often an easy and appropriate way to communicate with those people they are so accustomed to meeting along their Cross and River Street routes.

Whether it's patting the new baby or sharing a weekly hug with neighbors or simply holding someone' s arm while your'e talking together, Depot Towners seem to be 'in touch' with each other more than the folks observed in public behavior at the local malls or subdivisions.

Anyone met along the sidewalks of this district who does not meet your eye and greet you with a look or warm word is probably here on their first trip from Ann Arbor. Don't be offended by their aloofness. Just set a good example and watch how quickly they can catch on the this old fashioned way of doing things.

YPSILANTI RECYCLING PROJECT

651 Rice Street

(just north of the Farmers' Market in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town

Open every Saturday

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

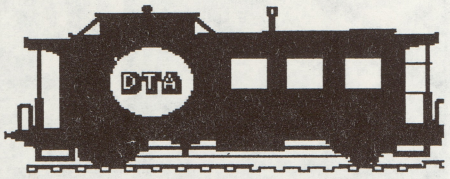
Collecting newspaper, glass, used motor oil and ferrous cans

A non-profit organization

J&R TRADING POST
GENERAL STORE

"A blend of past & present,
with an eye on the future!"
21 East Cross • 483-5870

Your sponsoring ad
can appear here for
only $10 a month to support
your neighborhood newspaper.
Just leave your copy at The Old Caboose.



D.T.A. 15 December'88

Guests - Mark Cotter, Finns J,M&J Insurance
Marianne McDonald

Minutes of last month's meeting were reviewed and approved.

Treasurer's Report - $1012.83 in general fund. No breakdown of line item amounts is available this month.

Standing Committees:

Budget & Events - D.T.A. will meet in executive session with special committee members Gary and Carolyn McKeever Thursday, December 29. The committee plans to redefine the goals of DTA activities and to establish criteria for prospective partnerships. Topics of discussion will include music partnerships for Heritage Festival and a preliminary proposal for event co-sponsorship with the Ypsilanti J.C.s.

- Tom Dodd will verify WEMU's intentions regarding next year's **Frog Island** Blues & Jazz Festival.
- Marianne McDonald volunteered to research the viablility of a **DTA bingo** connection. (Marianne just lost her guest status!)
- All will report next month.

NIFTY - No report.

Rag Report - The DTA welcomes new sponsors and thanks renewing sponsors for their support in making this, The Rag, possible.

Caboose - For an unbeatable ambiance, the best event rental is the Caboose. Only $25 per event with $10 key deposit. Contact Gary McKeever @ 485-4856.

2nd Vice Presidents:

Foundation - No report

Engineering Society - for help with your holiday put-up or clean-up or any other odd or not so odd job, leave word @ The Old Caboose (mail slot).

Artists & Artisans - no report.

Antique Engine Club - annual Christmas dinner in the Freight House December 10th.

Merchants -

- Ideas or images for Depot Town's streetscape @ next year's Heritage Festival (August 18,19,20) should be submitted NOW, before plans are laid. Contact Jack Miller, official Depot Town representative @ 482-5200, or Judi Monaghan, unofficial, but interested emmissary, @ 482-3919.
- Paul Fetters reported on a very successful **Victorian Holiday kick-off** with a full Freight House, 47 entries in the bake-off, and over 100 photos with Santa in the Caboose. The carriage rides through Riverside Park didn't happen as planned. Maybe next year . . .

Other business -

- Carolyn McKeever reports that the **Festival of Lights** is hosting 1500-4000 guests each night. If you'd like to volunteer as a gate host, contact the Visitors & Convention Bureau 482-4920.
- **Insurance studied** -Mark Cotter, of Finn's JM&J Insurance will be working toward redefining our insurance coverage as we redefine our involvement in neighborhood activities, breaking down cost per activity and subsidiary group.
- **Heritage Festival Committee** is trying and vying for the Artrain to stop our way again for next summer's festivities - August 18,19,20.

Golden Goose Award -

- for the theft of the "Festival of Lights" and "Free" signs at the Riverside Park entry and to
- "Sue and Scott" (Frog Island bridge painters). True love doesn't need graffiti advertising. Tacky, tacky, tacky!

Best Yet Award -

- The Merchants' effort in putting together a wonderful celebration, The 1988 Victorian Holiday. We're look forward to your continued input and involvement in 1989.

January 1989

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of the block:

Foundation
8 p.m. Thursday, 1/5
in The Old Caboose

Merchants
5:15 Thursday, 1/19
Old Town Restaurant

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 1/19
in The Old Caboose

Artists & Artisans
7:30 p.m. Monday, 1/16
Depot Town Art Gallery
19 East Cross Street

Antique Engine Club
7:30 p.m. Friday, 1/26
Freight House Coffee Shop

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

Depot Town Association, Inc.
Jacob Guter, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

"They auctioned off the old church today" is the working title of a new song by Ken Croff. Ken passed these words on to The Rag after reading last month's "A Victorian Storefront in Missing," pointing out that his verses were inspired by another country musician's comments about buying an old church in southern Illinois for his retreat from the usual Las Vegas rooms he plays today.

Only Ken's words are available at this time, but if the neighbors keep after 'Country Ken,' he'll soon be able to perform this one at his every-other-week performances in the Saturday morning Farmers' Market --

They auctioned off the old church today
And another old time landmark has fell by the way.
The beautiful sounds from its bell tower will echo out no more.
And it's once-proud congregation won't file through its doors.

It stood proud and serene for one hundred-fifty years.
And now that it's gone, hardly anyone sheds a tear.
There were bapstisms, marriages and funerals;
Yes, many sad and happy days.
Now they've auctioned off the old church today.

It was such a source of comfort in good times and in bad,
And the old time box lunch socials was the best times we ever had.
"It was our mighty fortress," the preacher would always say.
Yes, they auctioned off the old church today.

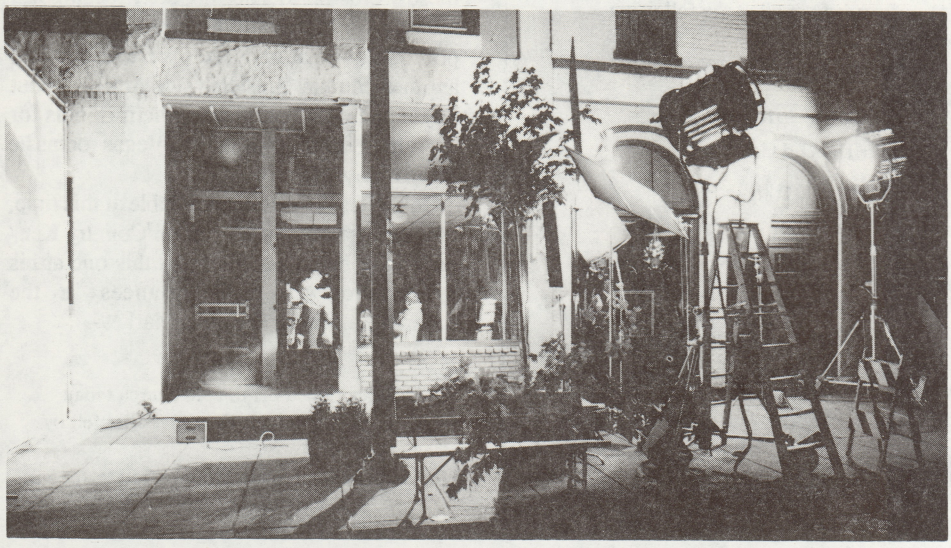
So it stood there like a beacon all thorugh our hard work week.
And on the seventh day, when we rested, its shelter we would seek.
To honor our Lord and Savior in our own special way.
Yes, they've auctioned off the old church today.

It seems that old white wooden church must have been heaven-sent.
And today, everything of beauty is replaced by bricks and cement.
So many people don't care about the things of yesterday,
So, they auctioned off the old church today.

Patronize the sponsors who bring you the monthly Depot Town Rag . . .

GM commercial shows (quick) glimpses of our favorite neighborhood

Photos by Lynda Hummel



Fake trees, a raised sidewalk and powerful lights made Ike Depot Town Barbershop look like a regular work day - even at 4 a.m.! Ike was the only Depot Towner to appear in any of the three commercials. He looks just like a real barber. All the rest were actors trying to look like us.

Actor, Joe (?) waits for his cue to see if he can pass himself off as Depot Town's Hudson dealer, Jack Miller. Yes, even Jack would raise the blinds to see a truck full of new cars unload.

What will an active Depot Town DDA do for the district? (continued from page one)

Continued from page one -and declining tax base resulting from changing patterns of employment and shopping. The whole idea was to let people in a neighborhood including a business district help themselves to halt decline and reverse blight. And it creates an opportunity for the people directly affected to find and execute solutions to the problems of their own community.

There are several steps in the process of creating and using a DDA. The district must be created by the City Council and sometimes it is in response to a petition from people in the district, as was the case in Depot Town. Then a board of nine members has to be appointed by the Mayor who becomes one member of that board. The property boundaries of the district are published at a scheduled-hearing after which the council can vote approval. Once this is done, the Authority (the board) can go to work.

Two mil tax: In most large cities, the work of a DDA is done by planning firms or professional staff hired by the authority. The cost is usually covered by a tax of not more than two mils levied by the city council on property within the district. As a reslt of an amendment, this money may also be used on projects and improvements in the district.

The plan: Before the DDA can receive and spend additional money, however, it must develop a well defined plan that can promote economic growth and get this plan and the proposed financing There is hardly any limit provided it is legal, beneficial and wins the approval of city council.

T.I.F.- a continuing cycle of growth: The most important means of financing provided by the law is called Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). This simply means that the amount of any incremental increases in taxes resulting from improvements made to property in the district after the plan is adopted, can be dedicated exclusively to the district to carry out the approved plan. This means that the district is not taxed any more than it would be without the DDA. It also means that new tax receipts in the district are used only for public improvements in that district and these receipts come from private imrovements in the district. The idea is that as the district improves, this will inspire more private improvements which will then fund more public improvement creating a continuing cycle of growth and development.

The governing board can plan or propose almost any kind of activity. This might be a repair, a rehabilitation, a reuse or a revision. It might involve new construction, remodeling, or redisigning a public area. It might involve buying or leasing a private property and eventually reselling it. The main criteria is thta it should improve the economic climate in the district. With city approval, the board can enter into contracts, borrow money and hire contractors. They can receive grants and donations from government and private sources. There is hardly any limit provided it is legal, beneficial and wins the approval of city council.

The effectiveness and success of a DDA, of course, depends on the ingenuity and creative thinking of its board. It also depends on the board's getting the right administrators to run the projects. But in more than two decades, DDAs across America have brought about exciting benefits to the cities that created them.

What the DDA could do in Depot Town

- flower bed summer maintenance
- replication of the tower at the crossing of the railroad, Cross and River Streets
- improved public parking
- entry signs to the district
- improvements and repairs to the City-owned Freight House
- lighting and signs for Frog Island and Riverside Park
- hire a full-time project manager

HANSEN'S
STANDARD PRINTING
35 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
483-0339

Good Food

Aubree's Saloon & Second Floor
39 East Cross Street

•

Old Town Restaurant
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
38 East Cross Street

•

Sidetrack
Good Food, Good Drinks
Good Times
56 East Cross Street
483-1053

•

The Mean Bean
"Gourmet Mexican"
Black beans are our specialty
17 East Cross Street

•

Red Rooster Pizza
37 East Cross • 483-4555

Olde Towne Coin & Gold
18 East Cross
483-6155

at the
Ypsilanti Farmers Market
MESSINA'S CHEESE
483-1480

RAGTIME
Keeping in touch
Down in
Depot Town

Hon's Flowers & Fancies
46 East Cross
482-2124

Depot Doo
Fine Design in Hair Style
25 East Cross Street • 484-3045

483-3637
Our Little Secret
Resale Clothing & Other Niceties
23 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
In Historic Depot Town

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
in historic Depot Town
Every Wed. & Sat.
8 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Miller's SINCE 1906
ICE CREAM
Open All Year!
42 E. CROSS
HISTORIC DEPOT TOWN

Antiques

Jim MacDonald's Antiques
&
Apple Annie's
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29 East Cross • 481-0555

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Over 4000 square feet of dealers
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Something for Everyone
CROSS STREET ANTIQUES
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Antiques Bought & Sold
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We love to buy
Antiques
DEPOT EXHANGE ANTIQUES
54 E. Cross • 482-1780
Next to Sidetrack
Professional Stripping & Refinishing

Big Bob's Magazines
Magazines Comic Posters
50 East Cross • 485-4930

Ike's Depot Barbershop
40 East Cross Street

YPSI FOOD COOP
WHOLE NATURAL FOOD IN BULK OR SMALL QUANTITIES
M.T.Th.F. 10-7 Wed. 10-9 312 N.River
483-1520 Sat. 9-7 Sun. 12-5

RIVER ARTWORKS
CUSTOM FRAMING
DESIGNER MATS
48 E. CROSS
DEPOT TOWN
482-8785